United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Santa Fe National Forest
Supervisor's Office
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File Code: 1950; 2720
Date: May 4, 2018

Dear Interested Party:

I am pleased to present the proposed action for the New Mexico Gas Company Pipeline Maintenance Project (Pipeline Maintenance Project). The Santa Fe National Forest is proposing to allow the implementation of pipeline inspections, maintenance, and repairs on the Department of Energy (DOE) natural gas pipeline on National Forest System lands on approximately 25 miles of the Cuba, Jemez and Espanola Ranger Districts of the Santa Fe National Forest.

We prepared this environmental assessment to determine whether effects of the proposed activities may be significant enough to prepare an environmental impact statement. By preparing this environmental assessment, we are fulfilling agency policy and direction to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. For more details of the proposed action, see the "Proposed Action" section of this document.

Location of the Proposed Project Area

The New Mexico Gas Company (NMGC) owns, operates and maintains the existing DOE 10-inch diameter, high pressure natural gas transmission mainline. The DOE pipeline extends from near Nageezi, NM to Los Alamos, NM, crossing approximately 25 miles of the Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) and approximately 13 miles of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) lands in the Jemez Mountains, within Sandoval, Rio Arriba, and Los Alamos counties (See Figure 1). Today the pipeline services the national security objectives of the DOE's Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in addition to supplying natural gas service to communities in northern New Mexico. The DOE mainline's natural gas supply is critical to the health, safety, and economy of communities throughout New Mexico. If the DOE pipeline is taken out of service, particularly in the peak winter months, it could lead to inadequate supplies of natural gas to both LANL and residents in northern New Mexico.

Need for the Proposal

The purpose of the New Mexico Gas Company Pipeline Maintenance Project (Pipeline Maintenance Project) is to allow the implementation of pipeline inspections, maintenance, and repairs set forth by the Pipeline Safety Act of 2011 and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. Inspections, maintenance, and repairs are critical to protecting the public from possible incidents and ensuring delivery of natural gas to the region.

This project is needed because the DOE pipeline was constructed in 1949 and is experiencing the effects of age, especially on the National Forest where it is located in areas of high annual precipitation and snowfall. The route where the pipeline crosses through the Santa Fe National Forest and Valles Caldera National Preserve, is located within areas with potential suitable habitat and critical habitat for three federally listed species: Jemez Mountain salamander (JMS), New Mexico meadow jumping mouse

(NMMJM), and the Mexican spotted owl (MSO). Following the section 7 consultation process (ESA) with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), impacts to these three species would be evaluated and conservation measures would be included in the implementation of pipeline inspections, maintenance, and repairs.

Proposed Action

NMGC conducts maintenance and repair tasks each year on the DOE pipeline. Annual activities such as gas leak and cathodic protection surveys and meter, valve, and regulator inspections require no ground disturbing work. Rubber tired vehicles use main roads and established pipeline service roads for access. Earth disturbing maintenance and repair over the past five years include cathodic protection installations, pipeline repairs, washout repair, and modifications to allow analytical tools to pass through the pipeline. Since 2009, activities implemented in response to Pipeline Safety Act regulations include 230 anodes; 4,852 linear feet of pipe replacement resulting from identified leaks, dents, and corrosion; a washout remediation; one-time system modifications to block valves, and the removal of a drip tank and a few taps to allow integrity management inspections. All activities have occurred directly over the previously disturbed pipeline and service roads and amount to 3.2 percent of the total right-of-way square footage (5,860,800 sq ft) and 2.5 percent of the total linear feet (37 miles) during the eight-year period.

The Pipeline Maintenance Project proposes to allow NMGC to conduct annual maintenance and repair tasks annually on the DOE pipeline. General activities associated with the recurring maintenance, repair, and replacement of the pipeline and associated facilities located throughout SFNF lands include pipeline inspections, line locating, cathodic protection, right-of-way clearing, road maintenance, leaking surveying, and the repair and/or replacement of the pipeline. Proposed activities include:

- Routine Inspections
    - Routine System Inspections
    - Leak Survey and Leak Repair
- Integrity Management Inspections
    - In-Line Inspections (ILI)
    - Direct Assessment (DA)
    - Pressure Testing
- Repairs/Remediation
- Cathodic Protection/Corrosion Control
- Erosion Repair and Pipeline Lowering
- Vegetation Management
- Road Maintenance
- Valve Inspection and Maintenance
- Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA)
- Pipeline Markers and Line Locating
- Emergency Response
    - Fire Protection

Table 1 provides a summary of the frequency and extent of earth disturbing maintenance work on the DOE pipeline.

Table 1. Summary of frequency and extent of earth disturbing maintenance work on DOE pipeline

Earth Disturbing Activity	Typical Equipment Used	Support Equipment	Placement of Excavated Material	Excavation Dimensions	Time to complete	Estimate of How Many per Year
Leak Survey and Repair (earth disturbing activity only due to leak repair	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4WD pickups, ATVs, water haulers as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 24-36 inches wide by 20-200 ft long, depending on repair, for typical 4 ft depth of pipe.	1-5 days per repair, depends on depth of pipe, access to location	1
In-Line Inspection (earth disturbing activity only due to removal of lodged ILI tool)	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4WD pickups, ATVs, water haulers as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 24-36 inches wide by 50-200 ft long, depending on ability to locate tool, for typical 4 ft depth of pipe.	1-5 days, depends on depth of pipe, access to location	Extremely low probability of occurring, <<1
Pipeline Direct Assessment (earth disturbing activity only due to direct examination of pipe)	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4WD pickups, ATVs, water haulers as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 24-36 inches wide by 20-100 ft long, depending on assessment requirements, for typical 4 ft depth of pipe.	1-3 days per examination, depends on depth of pipe, access to location	5 if DA is used. Unlikely to use DA. Other methods of assessment are preferred
Pressure Testing (earth disturbing activity only due to accessing pipe at ends)	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4WD pickups, ATVs, water haulers, temporary water tanks	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 36-48 inches wide by 30 ft long at either end of the test, for typical 4 ft depth of pipe.	1-5 days per test, depends on depth of pipe, access to location	<1

Pipeline Repairs and Anomaly Remediation	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4WD pickups, ATVs, water haulers as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 24-36 inches wide by 50-200 ft long, depending on anomaly repair or verification, for typical 4 ft depth of pipe.	1-5 days per repair, depends on depth of pipe, access to location, and repair methods necessary	10
Cathodic Protection (Anode Installation)	Backhoe, excavator or auger truck depending on depth of pipe	4wd pickups, ATVs, water hauler as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 48-60 inches wide by 10 ft long for typical 4 ft depth pipe	2-3 anode installations per day, depends on depth of pipe, access to location, proximity to other installations	20-300 anode installations within 12 months of Close Interval Survey, as per DOT Requirement
Erosion Control/Remediation	Backhoe, excavator, road grater or wheel loader depending on remediation method required to protect pipeline	4wd pickups, ATVs, water hauler as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the excavated areas with ROW	Depends on erosion control method and/or structure requirement; 150 sq. ft. for typical lead out ditches	1-10 days per site, depends on depth of pipe, access to location, and extend of erosion to remediate	1
Vegetation Management	Brush mower or tracked mulcher	4wd pickups, ATVs	None	None	1-5 days, depends on extents of vegetation, access to location, method of clearing	Once per 3-5 year cycle
Road Maintenance (surface maintenance to access pipeline ROW)	Road grader, backhoe or wheel loader	4wd pickups, ATVs, water hauler as necessary	Earth disturbing activities limited to surface maintenance where significant erosion or rutting has occurred	Depends on road maintenance necessary	1-5 days, depends on extents of maintenance necessary, access to location	1

Valve and Station Installation	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4wd pickups, ATVs, water hauler as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 24-36 inches wide by 50 ft long for typical 4 ft depth of pipe	1-5 days per installation, depends on depth of pipe, access to location	1
SCADA Tower Installation	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4wd pickups, ATVs	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 48 inches wide by 48 inches long for typical tower installation	1-3 days per installation, depends on access to location, weather during installation	<1
Pipeline Marking	Backhoe (potentially)	4wd pickups, ATVs	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirement	Excavation 24 inches wide by 24 inches long for mile marker installation	2-3 markers installed per day, depends on access to location, proximity to other installations	10
Emergency Response	Backhoe or excavator, depending on depth	4wd pickups, ATVs, water hauler as necessary	Spoil pile placed upslope and along the side of the trench within the ROW; minimum two feet away from trench per OSHA requirements	Trench 24-36 inches wide by 20-100 ft long, depending on repair, for typical 4 ft depth of pipe.	1-5 per site, depends on depth of pipe, access to location, and repair methods necessary	1

Although comments are welcome anytime, they would be most effective if received by May 24, 2018. Please submit comments to Sandra Imler-Jacquez, Environmental Coordinator, at 11 Forest Lane Santa Fe, NM 87508, phone (505) 438-5443 or by email to comments-southwestern-santafe@fs.fed.us. If you do not wish to comment at this time, but would like to continue receiving information about this project, please let us know. Additional information about this project will be sent to those people who request it or who have submitted comments during the analysis process.

Sincerely,

JAMES E. MELONAS
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure – Vicinity Map

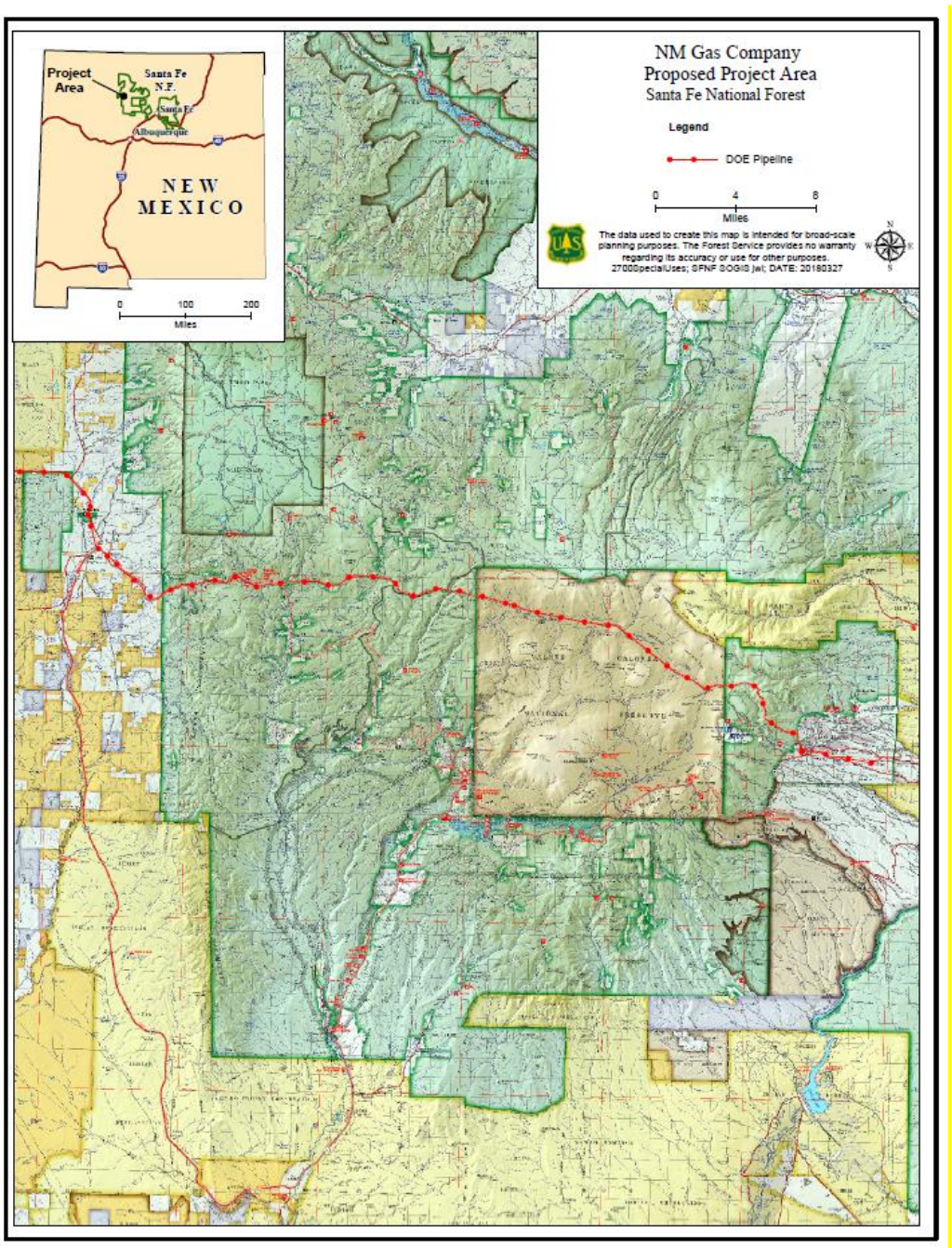

Figure 1. Vicinity map